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Although educators have been turning to motion pictures and television as devices for supplementing instruction, there has been a sparsity of instruction about the elements of film or how to understand the medium. An innovative program designed to meet this need was introduced at St. Gregory's College. The course dealt with the history and the grammar of the medium, the film in relation to other art forms, and the film as an artistic esthetic experience. Methods of instruction included lectures, screening of films, discussions in groups and as an entire class, and reading and summarizing film reviews. The class met three hours a week for 15 weeks. Projects were the preparation of portfolios containing critic and student film reviews or the preparation of a 5- to 10-minute film grammar and technique. At the conclusion of the course, the 42 students were asked to evaluate the objectives, film selections, and course content. All students agreed that the proposed objectives had been accomplished. With few exceptions, the students agreed that the films screened adequately represented the academic area under study. As a result of the evaluation it was decided that (1) the attempt to offer a comparative study of the film in relation to other art forms should be eliminated, (2) the order in which the material was presented should be altered, and (3) more concentration should be given to the era of the 1930's. (DG)

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Oklahoma Consortium on Research Development

Pilot Grant: Introduction to Film

Final Report

1968

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LOS ANGELES

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CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION

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Pilot Grant: Introduction to Film

Final Report

According to a report by the American Council of Education (1965), of the institutions of higher education in Oklahoma, only Oklahoma State University offers a course in the history, criticism, and appreciation of the motion picture. In comparison, this survey reports that 54 percent of the one hundred largest institutions of higher education in the country offer such courses.

Unfortunately, at the junior college level, there are no such statistics. Although a few junior colleges in California offer courses related to film, there is no such curriculum in the southwest. In a letter from John E. Roueche of the ERIC Clearing House for Junior Colleges, he stated: "Your course in the area of film . . . is interesting and innovative--so innovative that the Clearing House has nothing in its collection."

But the need for such a course is evident. To the student of the 1960's, it is the age of the image. Born as a member of the first generation to grow up with television, he was "plugged in" early. As a toddler he was placed in front of the television because it "kept him quiet." As a child it served as his primary source for contact with his non-home environment.

John Culkin, S. J., director of the Center for Communications at Fordham University, estimates that by the time the average student graduates from high school, he has viewed over 15,000 hours of television and has attended some 500 movies. Only the time he has spent in sleep surpasses the time he has spent in front of an electronic image.

Educators have learned to respect this fact. Spawned by Marshall McLuhan's cry, "The medium is the message," an early cult exploded into a large scale movement. It has found that the film is a most successful device for breeding understanding of human situations. Students react, they discuss, they argue, they agree. In short, they learn.

But for the more serious student of film, educators have offered little. With the exception of a few major universities, mostly in the coastal regions of the country, little has been done to innovate programs which treat film as <u>film</u>. True, there is a great deal being done with film as a device for motivating

discussion of moral situations or to provide social commentary or to define Christianity and human values in "feature film settings." But these approaches do little to teach students how to evaluate the elements of film or how to understand what the medium is all about.

With the above in mind, this pilot project, INTRODUCTION TO FILM, attempted to establish a system of instruction which would:

1) provide the student a basic knowledge of the history of the medium;

2) provide the student a basic knowledge of the grammar of the medium;

3) provide the student a comparative study of the film in relation to other art forms;

4) provide setting for artistic aesthetic experience.

In order to accomplish these objectives, the system included:

1) Lectures: to present current thought in film criticism and history;

2) Screening: screening of films to illustrate material presented in lectures and to provide a setting for aesthetic experience;

3) Discussion:

   a) Cell: Following the screening of a movie, the class was divided into groups of five in order to criticize the film.

      Group: At the following meeting, each cell presented its criticism to the entire class. Class discussion followed.

4) Reading: Students were required to read and summarize reviews of films. They were encouraged to choose reviews written by leading film critics, read them, analize their frame of reference, and conclude with opinion about the reviewer.

These procedures were implemented as follows:

1) Class schedule: (16 weeks)

   a) Two (2) one hour sessions for lecture and discussion; (per week)

   b) One (1) two hour session for film screening; (per week)

2) Required Texts:

   a) Knight Arthur. The Liveliest Art. MacMillan. 1957.

   b) Jacobs, Lewis., ed. Introduction to the Art of the Movies. Noonday. 1967.

   c) Houston, Penelope. The Contemporary Cinema. Penguin. 1966.

3) Evaluation:

   a) Objective testing for factual information;

   b) Subjective testing, both written and oral, for insight into student appreciation;

   c) Required assignments: Each student was required to

      either

      1. Prepare a portfolio containing:

         a. a summary of a review by a critic who gave the film viewed a favorable review;

         b. a summary of a review by a critic who gave the film viewed an unfavorable review;

         c. A review written by the student.

      or

      2. Produce a film of 5-10 minutes in length which would give evidence of the students knowledge of basic film grammar and technique. Students were allowed to work in groups of three. Film was shot on 8mm stock.

4) Divisinn of Subject Matter: The course was divided into two major areas: 1) Appreciation 2) History

Course Outline

Appreciatinn

1st week: Introduction

2nd week: Elements of Film (Screening) OFM Productions
---Discussion
Visual Language of Film (Screening) OFM Productions
---Discussion

3rd week: Night of the Iquana (Screened through film society)
---Cell Discussion
---Group Discussion

4th week: Gospel According to St. Matthew (Screened through film society)
---Cell Discussion
---Group Discussion

5th week: La Notte (Screened through film society)
---Cell Discussion
---Group Discussion

6th week: Black Orpheus (Screened through film society)
---Cell Discussion
---Group Discussion

7th week: La Dolce Vita (Screened through film society)
---Cell Discussion
---Group Discussion

8th week: Review of film grammar and technique
Examination

History

9th week Lecture: A Compendium of Film History
Origin of the Motion Picture (Screening) MMAFL*
The First Programs (Screening) MMAFL
Early Edison Shorts (Screening) MMAFL

10th week: Lecture: Birth of Modern Film Technique
Birth of a Nation (Screening) MMAFL
Group Discussion

11th week: Lecture: Editing the Image
Potemkin (Screening) MMAFL
Group Discussion

* Museum of Modern Art Film Library

12th week: Lecture: The Coming of Sound
The Jazz Singer Program (Screening) MMAFL
Group Discussion

13th week: Lecture: The Creative Sound Track
Citizen Kane (Screening) Brandon
Group Discussion

14th week: Lecture: The Post War Cinema
The Bicycle Thief (Screening) Brandon
Group Discussion

15th week: Lecture: The Animated Motion Picture
A Short History of Animation (Screening) MMAFL
Group Discussion

16th week: Lecture: The New Cinema
Two (Screening) Audio Film Center
Montage II (Screening) Audio Film Center
Death of Hollywood Extra (Screening) Audio Film Center
Five by Conner (Screening) Audio Film Center

Student Evaluation

As a part of the college curriculum at St. Gregory's College, the course was open to all students. Forty-two of the five hundred and fifty students enrolled in the course.

At the conclusion of the course students were asked to evaluate their experiences in three areas: objectives, film selections, and course content.

Objectives:

All students agreed that the proposed objectives had been accomplished. There was not total agreement as to the degree of accomplishment.

	Excellent 1	2	3	4	Poor 5
1. To provide the student a basic knowledge of the history of the medium.	52%	42%	4%	2%	-
2. To provide the student a basic knowledge of the grammar of the medium.	36%	36%	20%	6%	2%
3. To provide the student a comparative study of the film in relation to other art forms.	31%	30%	26%	11%	2%
4. To provide setting for aesthetic experience.	40%	31%	29%	-	-

Film Selections:

With few exceptions the students agreed that the films screened adequately represented the academic area under study.

Academic area under study	Film shown in laboratory session	Did you think the film adequately represented the academic area? Yes	No
The Early Years	The First Programs *	86%	14%
	Early Edison Shorts *	98%	2%
The Birth of Modern Film Technique	Birth of a Nation*	97%	3%
Editing the Image	Potemkin*	86%	14%
The Coming of Sound	Jazz Singer Program*	89%	11%
The Creative Sound Track	Citizen Kane*	90%	10%
Animation	A Short History of Animation*	79%	21%
The New Cinema	Two*	98%	2%
	Montage II*	90%	10%
	Death of Hollywood Extra*	64%	36%
	Five by Conner*	90%	10%

* Films marked * were rented through funds provided by OCRD.

Film Grammar	Elements of the Film*	57%	43%
	Visual Language of Film*	59%	41%
Appreciation	Night of the Iguana	86%	14%
	Gospel According to St. Matthew	75%	25%
	La Notte	90%	10%
	Black Orpheus	92%	8%
	La Dolce Vita	90%	10%

* Films marked * were rented through funds provided by OCED.

Course Content:

1) Did you understand the objectives before you enrolled in this course?

   Yes 59% No 41%

2) Did you understand the objectives during the course?

   Yes 88% No 12%

3) Do you feel that your "film sense" has developed as a result of this course?

   Yes 96% No 12%

4) Would you recommend this course to a classmate?

   Yes 88% No 12%

5) Considering the challenge of the subject matter of this course to you, would you say it was:

   a) extremely challengin? 39%
   b) adequately challenging? 55%
   c) less than challenging? 6%

6) How well have you been able to understand this course?

   a) It has been too elementary.
   b) It has been occasionally oversimplified. 2%
   c) It has been at my level of comprehension. 63%
   d) I have been able to grasp it with some difficulty. 33%
   e) It has generally been beyond my level of comprehension. 2%

7) To what extent does this course require outside reading of you?

a) to a very great extent. 35%
b) to a moderate extent. 52%
c) to a very small extent. 13%

General Comments

Although the student evaluation indicates many of the strengths and weaknesses of this project, a few general comments are necessary to highlight needed alterations.

First of all, the course attempts to cover to much material for the time alloted. Of the four proposed objectives, it is suggested that the attempt to offer a comparative study of the film in relation to other art forms be eliminated. This is a suitable objective for an entire semester's study.

Secondly, the order of material presented should be altered. It is suggested that the course begin with a two week unit on basic film grammar and technique, then, omitting the section on appreciation, begin immediately with film history. The appreciation section can then be included at the end of the course. This would allow the students to have a more general understanding of the medium before they are expected to be able to offer constructive criticism of films. It should, too, fuel cell group discussion.

In most instances the films selected were good. Perhaps more concentration should be given to that era of the 1930's. The gap between The Jazz Singer and Citizen Kane needs to be filled.

Selection of films to illustrate the "new" cinema in America is most difficult. There are few opportunities in the southwest to view many of the excellent films being produced by the independent filmmakers. One must rely on film catalogues to be honest in their description. Such is not always the case.

The OFM Production films concerning film elements, etc., are rather elementary in nature. They would serve a high school course much better.

Budget
OCRD Pilot Grant
Introduction to Film
1968

Film Rentals:

Date	Title	Invoice	Totals
2/13/68	Elements of the Film	$15.00	
	Visual Language of Film	$15.00	
			$30.00
3/26/68	Origins of Motion Picture The First Programs Early Edison Shorts	$24.00	
	Postage and Insurance	1.50	
			$25.50
4/2/68	Birth of a Nation	$30.00	
	Postage and Insurance	1.75	
			$31.75
4/9/68	Potemkin	$30.00	
	Postage and Insurance	1.75	
			$31.75
4/23/68	Jazz Singer Program	$30.00	
	Postage and Insurance	1.50	
			$31.50
4/30/68	Citizen Kane	$32.50	
	Postage and Insurance	2.25	
			$34.75
5/7/68	Bicycle Thief	$45.00	
	Postage and Insurance	2.10	
			$47.10
5/14/68	Animated Program	$30.00	
	Postage and Insurance	1.50	
			$31.50
5/21/68	Avante-Garde Program	$57.50	
		1.90	
			$59.40
Return postage on all films:			$17.22
			$340.47
OCRD Funds		$350.00	
Balance			$ 9.53